DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 044 953 FL 001 930

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TITLE	A Versatile Number Game.
INSTITUTION	Group for Environmental Education, Philadelphia, Pa.
PUB DATE	68
NOTE	3p.
JOURNAL CIT	English for Immigrants; v2 p14-16 Spr 1968
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.25
DESCRIPTORS	Childrens Games, Cognitive Development, Cognitive Processes, *Educational Games, *Elementary School Mathematics, *Fles, Games, Instructional Program Divisions, Language Development, *Language Instruction, Mathematics Education, Mathematics Instruction, Mathematics Materials, *Teaching Techniques

ABSTRACT

Description of a game involving linguistic recognition and practice with numbers ranging from one through 20 points out the value of cognition and oral practice in language acquisition. Variations of the game focusing on simple multiplication and addition are also examined. (RL)

ED044953

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From: English for Immigrants, 2 Spring 1968

A Versatile Number Game
GWEN SMOLINS

The value of games in giving oral practice of structures in a meaningful way is well known and over the years I have amassed a fair collection of games for use with junior age children. Recently I found, however, that I had very little for practice of numbers. What was needed was a game that could give practice both in recognition of numbers up to 20, and in using the numbers orally. The following game was devised and its success was such that I think it worth passing on to others needing similar practice games.

I took 2 sheets of card about 12" x 8" and divided them into 1" squares, giving about 60 squares per card, allowing for margins round the edge of the card. Each square had one of the numbers from 1 to 6 clearly printed in it. (Each number occurs about 10 times on each card.)

1	5	3	6	1	2	3	6	2	4
3	3	1	5	6	3	4	4	5	1
2	2	4	6	4	6	1	5	1	4
3	2	4	1	2	1	3	2	5	6
5	5	6	6	3	4	2	1	6	3
4	3	4	2	5	1	2	6	5	5

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Two children were each given a card, dice and a box of counters. The game was played in the following way: the first player threw the dice, said the number that was shown and covered an appropriate square with a counter. Then it was the second player's turn, and he repeated the actions of the first player. As the most important feature of the game was its value in the use of the numbers, the rule about each player saying the number he had thrown was strictly adhered to. In fact, once a player realised his opponent would pounce and call 'No go!' if he forgot to say the number thrown, then he took good care not to be caught out. The chance element comes in after the players have been playing for a little while, when they begin to throw numbers which have by this time all been covered . If, in his turn a player throws a number which has been covered, he must then wait until it is his turn again before he has another throw. Excitement mounts as the game nears the end, with each player having to throw just one particular number. There is no need to guard against cheating, I find, as the players watch each other like hawks!

This simple game proved so popular, even with older and more advanced language learners that I extended its scope. Using two dice, the numbers to 12 can be used and using number tops, one can get practice to 20 or 24. (Of course, different sets of cards are needed, with the different numbers in the squares.)

In addition to providing recognition and oral practice, the game can be adapted for tables practice, addition and even subtraction. For instance, a card for tables practice would have a large number in one corner, say, 4. Each square on the card would have one of the multiples or 4, up to 48. Using two tops, one giving nos. 1-6 and the other 7-12, the children are required to say, after their spin of the top 'Six (or whatever number is shown on the top) fours are 24'. Again, the words must be said before the square is covered, otherwise the player misses his turn. I found two boys playing their own variant. One child spun the top, which came down on eight and he asked his opponent 'What are eight fours?' The opponent gave the correct answer, covered the appropriate square and then, in turn spun the top and asked the next question.

As in all games, the language to be practised is decided by the teacher, but it is important to have a game in which the language to be practised will arise naturally out of the form of the game. If this is not done, the game will not be successful. I have used the one described above for practising numbers to 24, multiplication to 6 x 12 and simple addition to 24.

In preparation of the cards, size is immaterial, providing they can be divided into a fairly large number of squares and that the squares are of the correct size for the counters used. I find that an all-round margin is necessary, as the edges and corners soon become worn.(If a Banda or Fordigraph master of the grid is made, only the filling in of the numbers need be done by hand.) On the back of each card it is useful to the teacher to have a short description and for the children a pictorial description of the equipment, such as dice and counters, needed for the game.

A further popular variant is to play the game as a team game using the blackboard with two grids drawn on it. The dice are thrown in turn by members of the teams. For additional practice, it is played as follows: Team A, first player throws two dice (or spins two number tops) and calls out to a player in team B 'Ali, what are

6 and 7?' or whatever formula the teacher wishes the children to practise. If Ali gives the correct answer, a mark is put on one of the squares containing the number 13 and the questioning and the throw of the dice then pass to the first player in team B. As before, the winners are the team whose grid is completely covered first.

In this, as for other language games, it is necessary to remember that the language is the important feature, and that the game and its rules must be manipulated to give the desired practice in the language.